**3. Method**

In this chapter, the choices that were made regarding the research design, sampling, execution, and analysis are explained. The method that has been chosen is discussed first. Then, the sampling method and sample are described, followed by the survey procedure and stimulus material. This is followed by a description of the operationalization of the measurements. Finally, the validity of the research is explained.

**3.1 Choice of research method** To gather and analyze the data, this research used quantitative methods. Specifically, quantitative methods strive to be systematic because the goal is to capture details based on the empirical social world and represent them numerically (Neuman, 2014). This method aims to determine valid and reliable measurements that can be used for statistical analysis (Goertzen, 2017). This research gathered the data through an online experiment since experiments consider one of the most effective designs for testing causal hypotheses.

**3.1.1 Quantitative method**

Quantitative research strives to be systematic and precise as it tries to determine validity and reliability while analyzing the causal relationship between variables (Brennen, 2017). Since the aim of this research was to examine the relationship between the variables and to be able to determine whether the independent variable (greenwashing) does influence the dependent variable (eWOM), an online experiment was used as the most suitable method. Specifically, to examine the causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables, several hypotheses have been formulated based on literature research that has already been conducted. Since this research has one independent variable with three levels, these hypotheses were

examined through a unifactorial experiment design with three conditions: greenwashing, non-greenwashing, and a control group. This allowed the researcher to look at the independent variable in different situations and examine interactions between the factors (Collins et al., 2009). The type of experimental design was a between-subjects experiment. This means that the experiment participants were assigned to different conditions, each experiencing only one experimental condition (Charness et al., 2012). The experimental design provides the most effective method for testing causal hypotheses because it allows researchers to test each created condition's hypotheses, examining the variables in different positions (Check & Schutt, 2012). Each group in the experiment represents another condition of the independent variable (greenwashing) in order to examine whether it influences the dependent variable (eWOM)

The experiment was conducted online because of the current pandemic situation. Additionally, online experiments are cheaper, quicker, can result in large sample sizes, and have high statistical power (Barchard & Williams, 2008). A disadvantage of this online method is that issues of confidentiality and anonymity may arise. Survey respondents may have concerns around the issues surrounding survey privacy (Barchard & Williams, 2008). In order to protect participants' anonymity, the experiment included a small text on the first page clarifying that participants' data will be anonymous and used for a students' thesis. Besides, the buttons "consent" and "do not consent" "my data to be used and analyzed for educational purposes" were also added to the first page.   
 Another disadvantage of this online method is that online experiments can have low response rates (Fielding et al., 2017). To reduce the non-response rates, the experiment was optimized to function on laptops, computers, and mobile phones so that respondents can complete a survey on their preferred speed, even while they are on the move (Fielding et al., 2017). This research was unbiased since the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions through Qualtrics, and each group was equivalently treated. The control group's presence, coupled with random assignment, also decreased internal validity threats (Bryman, 2016).   
 Another disadvantage is that there may be biases in the final sample because participants cannot receive a personalized reminder email to continue their survey since experiments should be anonymous (Dandurand et al., 2008). As a result, if the respondents drop out during the experiment because they were somehow interrupted, they could not be asked if they would like to finish their session. Respondents can also drop out of the experiment when they feel exposed to controversial questions that they do not feel comfortable answering.   
 This research tried to prevent any possible implications by pilot-testing instruction, stating that the participation in these experiments is important and that the goal is to obtain valid scientific data. Furthermore, for increasing credibility, contact information for questions was provided in combination with the researcher's name and institutional affiliation (Dandurand et al., 2008). Also, several general reminders were sent out more than once by the researcher in the groups and apps. In the end, the questions included in the survey tried to be simple so that nobody will feel nervous or embarrassed to answer them. Accessible questions could increase the motivation of participants to stay and complete the survey.

**3.2. Sampling**

This research used a non-probability snowball sampling strategy as a part of convenience sampling. With snowball sampling, the researcher usually contacts a small group of people related to the research topic. Based on these connections, it reaches people beyond its network in a cheap and fast way (Bryman, 2016). This sampling method was chosen to spread the survey through social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. The selection of networking sites clarifies where the experiment was distributed and increased control over the sampling phase (Bryman, 2016). The survey was spread and answered by people from the researcher's network and applied to their networks, who share similar interests.

Εικόνα που περιέχει κείμενο

Περιγραφή που δημιουργήθηκε αυτόματα

*Figure 3.2.1. The message put on Facebook page of the researcher*

*Εικόνα που περιέχει κείμενο

Περιγραφή που δημιουργήθηκε αυτόματα*

*Figure 3.2.2. The message put on LinkedIn page of the researcher.*

A disadvantage of a convenience sample can be that it is often not representative of larger populations, raising concerns about external validity (Bryman, 2016). To counteract that, the survey was also spread to pages and mediums that the researcher is not a member of or does not already have an existing account. A larger sample can reduce the chance of bias. The research population was everyone that is over the age of 18, has used Facebook in the past half-year, and speaks English as the language of the questions in the experiment was English. Before sharing the survey online, three people read through the survey to make sure that everything was clear for them. In addition, the manipulation controls were also tested by three people to ensure that the random assignment in different conditions worked. After this, some adjustments were made concerning demographic questions, such as excluding the level of education since it did not seem to provide any needed information. Afterwards, the link to the experiment was spread on the researchers' Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Since the experiment was distributed online, people who are not familiar with the use of the internet were automatically excluded from participating in the survey. The survey reached a total of 468 respondents, but many of them did not finish the survey, leaving important questions unanswered. Eventually, this led to a sample of 287 participants whose responses have been collected between March 23 th and April 6 th.

**3.2.2 Demographics**

Several demographics, such as gender, age, and income, have been included in the survey as control variables. Based on previous literature, these demographics seemed to impact one or more variables of this research. For instance, concerning gender, Haytko and Matulich (2008) found that women tend to be more skeptical towards green marketing than men. Contrary, Paço and Reis (2012), found no significant gender difference concerning skepticism towards green advertising. Based on these contradictingl findings, gender was included in the research, and it will be tested to examine whether it has a significant effect on the research results.

Furthermore, since ethical goods tend to cost more than regular goods and since ethical consumption may be considered "luxury" for some, income was also included as a control variable. According to Starr (2009), people with higher income are more likely to engage in ethical consumption, but it is not clear that they are also more likely to embrace a wide range of ethical consumption practices. Based on the findings mentioned above, income has been taken into account in this experiment since it might influence the results. Finally, age was also included as a demographic question. Mishra et al. (2018) found that adolescents have incorporated the internet in various aspects of their lives. They use social media to engage in eWOM to voice their consumption experiences with other people who share the same interests. These findings of adolescents were taken into account since age may also influence this participants’ intentions to participate in eWOM.

**3.2.3 Sample**

The final sample included 287 respondents. A complete overview of demographic data is shown in Appendix A. All respondents were at least 18 years old. The observed age range has been 18 to 69, with a mean of 27.20 and a standard deviation of 7.07. Regarding gender, 83 (28.9%) respondents identified themselves as male and 202 (70.4%) identified as female. In addition, 2 participants (0.7%) would rather not share their gender.

All respondents answered the question about their yearly income. Most of them, more particularly 197 respondents (68.6%), earned between 0 and 24.999 euros per year. 37 respondents (12.9%) earn between 25.000 and 49.999, 6 participants (2.1%) earn between 50.000 and 74.999 euros and only 4 respondents (1.4%) earn between 75.000 and 99.999 euros per year. However, 15 participants (5.2) stated that they do not know their yearly income, while 28 participants (9.8) did not want to share their income.

All participants answered the questions about Facebook usage. 32 respondents (11.1) stated that they use Facebook very infrequently, 27 participants (9.4) stated that they use Facebook somewhat infrequently, while 51 participants (17.8) stated that they use Facebook occasionally. Most of the participants 75, (26.1 %), stated that they use Facebook somewhat frequently, while most participants, 102 (35.5 %), stated that they use Facebook very frequently.

Furthermore, participants were randomly assigned via Qualtrics into the three different conditions of the experiment. Specifically, 90 (31.3%) of the participants saw the greenwashing condition, 96 (33.4 %) saw the control condition, and 101 (35.2 %) saw the non-greenwashing condition.

**3.2.4 Survey procedure**

The research population of this survey was everyone above 18 that speaks English, as the language used for experiment questions was English and has a Facebook profile. The total responses recorded were 475. In total, 188 responses were excluded from the survey as non-valid. Of these 188 participants, 100 skipped some questions, 20 did not have a Facebook account, and 68 stopped answering the questions too early. Based on the data cleaning, the valid responses led to a sample of 287 respondents.

The experiment has been optimized to function on laptops, computers, and mobile phones, as referred to above. Besides, before starting the survey, participants read a message that informed them that the time needed to answer the questions was a maximum of six minutes, while the messages also made clear that participation was voluntary. Participants could quit anytime they wish to by just closing the internet browser. This information, combined with the increased accessibility of the experiment, may have increased the number of respondents. Furthermore, the experiment was shared through Facebook and LinkedIn. The researchers' network reshared the experiment, and as a result, the post was reshared 16 times, in 16 different Facebook profiles and three times in 3 different LinkedIn profiles.

Before starting the survey, participants had to give their consent, accepting that the data they provide will be used in this research. To increase participants' trust around anonymity and confidentiality of the research, the researcher's email has been presented given the respondents' opportunity to email the researcher with questions or comments. Nevertheless, there were no emails with additional questions or complaints about the survey. About the survey structure, the first question in the survey was about the participants' environmental concerns. The respondents answered how much they associate on a scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with statements around ethical consumption. After this, respondents received a Facebook post under three different conditions (i.e., the manipulation), showing additional messages about a fashion companys' sustainable collection. The following sub-chapter (i.e., 3.2.5 Stimulus material) is further elaborating on these three conditions.

Furthermore, after the manipulation, a manipulation check has been introduced to check consumers' interpretation of the post they just saw. Firstly, the respondents answered a statement concerning the fashion companys' post they just saw, on a scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" whether they perceived the company as sustainable. Secondly, questions about the morality and competence of the company followed. These two scales indicate the trust the respondents have in the organization they show the post about. Two more scales were then presented, asking the respondents whether they intended to share positive or negative eWOM concerning the post they just saw. In the end, the survey included questions about Facebook usage and demographic questions such as age, gender, and income. On the last page, the survey informed the participants that the company used was fictitious. The FTC (federal trade commission) link was presented if respondents wanted to explore the topic on a grander scale. Once more, the respondents are thanked for their participation, and the email of the researcher is included in case of questions (See Appendix).

Finally, the respondents were collected from all over Europe (mainly Greece and Netherlands; the researchers' birth country and currently country of residence) since the experiment was English.

**3.2.5 Stimulus materials**

The manipulation of this experiment consisted of three different conditions (greenwashing, non-greenwashing, and the control group). Participants received a text that they had to read carefully. This text included background information about the company from which they will afterward see a Facebook post. Participants saw the same Facebook post from the same fashion company three times but received a different message in each of the three conditions.

To be more precise, in the non-greenwashing condition, participants read a message about a fashion company's new sustainable collection, sustainable fabrics, and garment production procedures. The text that participants read provided some information around consumers' rising ethical clothing demand and brands' efforts to satisfy their needs. These efforts sometimes could be misleading since brands are allowed to incorporate green trademarks even though they do not represent their actual green performance. To support the information, an example about H&Ms' misleading sustainability actions was provided. In the end, the message made clear that according to an investigation made by FTC (Federal Trade Commission), this fashion brand scored high on sustainability. So, it claims and truly is sustainable. Then the participants saw a Facebook post. In the greenwashing condition, participants read the same message with the important difference that the FTC investigation proved that the fictitious fashion brand scored low on sustainability. The message made evident that the brand goes against its promised CSR and green initiatives and, in other words, is greenwashing. After that, participants saw the same Facebook post. In the end, the control group did not receive any additional information. This means that participants only saw a sentence that announced that a Facebook post would appear on the next page. The participants just saw the exact same Facebook post.

The Facebook post that participants saw was from a fictitious brand that launched a new sustainable activewear collection. The brand also claimed that each piece comprised 100% organic cotton and stated a new goal to become a climate-positive brand by 2030. The post was created using AdParlor, a website that made the post seem real since it is possible to illustrate reactions and choose the number of them such as 20 "wow," 60 "love," and 43 "angry" while also you can illustrate many comments and shares of the post. The fashion company's name was picked after research to make sure that there is no actual company using this name. The researcher later designed the brand's logo. The decision to make the fashion company fictitious was to tackle the thread of biases. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), consumer motives to engage in eWOM are mostly about brands they know and experiences with products of these known brands. When consumers have prior knowledge or experiences with a brand or product, they may have a more tender reaction to the spread of negative eWOM about the brand than consumers who do not have this prior knowledge or experience with the brand (Doh & Hwang, 2009). Using a fictitious fashion brand issues of biases by participants attached or who already had a specific brand image were tackled. Last but not least, participants did not know that there were multiple versions of the survey and that each one received and responded to a different condition. This means that respondents were unaware of the actual purpose of this research and the fact that different groups will be compared to each other.

**3.2 Measurements and operationalization**

This research's goal is to answer the research question. To do so, the data collected from the survey needs to be analyzed and tested for its reliability and validity. Reliability and validity can influence the quality of the data obtained. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the data, a manipulation check has been conducted, followed by factor analysis and reliability analysis for its' one of the factors.

**3.3.1 Manipulation Check**

A manipulation check has been included in the survey distributed in order to explore how different groups interpreted the manipulation they have seen. Specifically, after the manipulation text and Facebook post, respondents saw they had to answer to one question. This question was about whether they consider the company the Facebook post and text referred to as sustainable. This means that the manipulation was measured with one item through a continuous variable. Respondents were asked to indicate on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) whether the statement "34-threads is a sustainable fashion company" applied to them. All respondents answered the question (N = 287). The mean score was 4.42, with a standard deviation of 1.49.

**3.3.2 eWOM**

The dependent variable,*eWOM,* was measured with ten items (adapted from Eisingerich et al., 2015). Six items were about *positive eWOM,* and four were about *negative eWOM.* A factor analysis was conducted, including all the ten items used to measure eWOM. Specifically, a factor analysis using Principal Components extraction with Varimax rotation based on Eigenvalues (> 1.00), *KMO* = .88, χ2 (*N* = 287, 45) = 2105.48, *p* < .001) showed that the items indeed load upon two factors: *positive eWOM* and *negative eWOM.*

Positive eWOM explains 43,5 % of the variance, and negative eWOM explains 32.1 % of the variance.

Based on the factor analysis, *positive eWOM* intentions were measured with six items.  These included whether the respondent is willing to like the message, post a positive reaction under the message, would share the message with friends, would say positive things about it on Facebook, would recommend it to friends, and whether they would start to follow the Facebook page of the company. They will have to indicate their answers on a Likert scale on whether the statement will apply to them. The items were Likert-scale based, and respondents had to answer ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) whether the statement applied to them. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .91. This means that the scale is reliable. The items were computed into a new variable named *positive eWOM.* The mean score is 23.1, with a standard deviation of 8.4.

Furthermore, the other factor found is *negative eWOM* intentions, and it was measured with four items. These included whether the respondent is willing to post a negative reaction under the post, whether they want to share the post with their friends to express negative feelings about it if they would be willing to say negative things about the company on Facebook, and whether they would say negative things about the fashion products they deliver to their customers (Eisingerich et al., 2015). Respondents had to answer again based Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree) on whether the statement applied to them. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .93. This means that the scale is reliable. There was no need to delete an item since it would only decrease Cronbach's alpha score. The items were computed into a new variable named *negative eWOM*. The mean score of the scale is 8.2, with a standard deviation of 4.5.

Based on the factors, it was clear that the two variables, positive eWOM, and negative eWOM, have their own meaning. This means that they represent two different parts of eWOM, so it would be better to test them separately. Hypothesis 1 and 2 refer to positive and negative eWOM separately because, based on the literature, greenwashing is related to negative eWOM. At the same time, CSR activities and strong environmental performance are related to positive eWOM. Therefore, people's intentions and motives to participate in positive and negative eWOM might differ and, as a result, provide different outcomes.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3.3.2.1: Factor and reliability analysis for scales for eWOM | | |
| Item | Positive eWOM | Negative eWOM |
| I would give a positive reaction under the post. | .87 |  |
| I would say positive things about the company on Facebook. | .86 |  |
| I would start to follow the Facebook page of the company. | .83 |  |
| I would "like" this post on Facebook. | .83 |  |
| I would share this post with friends.  I would recommend the clothes of this company to friends. | .81  .81 |  |
| I would be willing to say negative things about the company on Facebook. |  | .95 |
| I would share the post with friends to express negative feelings. |  | .92 |
| I would give a negative reaction under the post. |  | .90 |
| I would say negative things about the fashion products they deliver to their customers. |  | .88 |
|  |  |  |
| R² (variance explained) | 43.46 | 32.17 |
| Cronbach’s alpha | .91 | .93 |

**3.3.3 Trust**

Trust is used as a mediator in this research and was measured with three items related to morality (honesty, sincerity, and trustworthiness) and three items related to competence (competence, intelligence, and skillfulness), which are both indicators of trust (Leach et al., 2007). For the first item based on morality, respondents indicated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 7 (Very High), whether based on their perception the fashion companys' norms and values correspond with the above characteristics. For the second item, based on competence, respondents had to indicate again on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 2 (Very High), whether based on their perception the fashion companys' norms and values correspond with the above characteristics.  
 A factors analysis using Principal Components extraction with Varimax rotation based on Eigenvalues (> 1.00), *KMO*= .82, χ2 (*N*= 287, 15) = 1309.45, *p* < .001) was conducted. The analysis showed that three items (honesty, sincerity, and trustworthiness) belonged to morality and the other three items (competence, intelligence, and skillfulness) belonged to competence. Since both of the two factors had the same value for measuring trust in this research, a new factor named *trust* was created, including both of the previous factors.

Reliability analysis was conducted to test the scale *Trust.* Precisely, the factor *Trust* gave a Cronbach's alpha of .89. This means that the scale is very reliable since the alpha had a score higher than .80. The mean score of the scale is 26.7, with a standard deviation of 6.68.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3.3.3.1: Factor and reliability analysis for scales for trust | | | |
| Item | | Morality | Competence |
| Sincerity | | .97 |  |
| Honesty | | .98 |  |
| Trustworthiness | | .85 |  |
| Competence | |  | .73 |
| Intelligence | |  | .96 |
| Skillfulness | |  | .91 |
|  |
| R² | | 66.56 | 16.96 |
| Cronbach’s alpha | | .93 | .86 |

Since the combination of these scales can provide a full explanation of the variable trust, it was decided to combine the two subscales into one scale named *trust.* To test the correlation between the two scales, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted. The results indicated that the two scales correlate significantly with each other (see table 3.3.3.2). The two scales, *competence,* and *morality* have been put together into a reliability test. The scales' Cronbach's alpha was .90, indicating a high-reliability score for the scale. The mean score is 26.7, and the standard deviation is 6.68. A new variable has been created, named *trust.* For every analysis from now on, this new variable is used for *trust* unless stated otherwise.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3.3.3.2: Correlation matrix components for the variable *trust* | | | | |
|  |  | Morality as a part of trust | Competence as a part of trust |  |
| Correlation | Morality as a part of trust | - |  |  |
|  | Competence as a part of trust | .598\* | - |  |
| *Note: \* p < .001* | | | | |

**3.4 Relationship Analysis**

The relationships between the variables in this research were tested through different types of analysis. Specifically, the relationship between the dependent variable (positive eWOM) and the independent variable (conditions) was tested through a two-way ANOVA, as well as the relationship between positive eWOM with the control variables (gender, environmental concern, and Facebook usage). The relationship between the dependent variable negative eWOM and the independent variable (conditions) was tested through a one-way ANOVA. The effect between the independent variable (conditions) and the dependent variable (eWOM) will be tested by bivariate regression analysis, as will the effect between the independent variable (conditions) and the mediator (trust). Finally, the mediation analysis will be done by conducting multiple regression analysis.

**3.5 Validity and reliability**

This research quality is going to be assessed based on validity and reliability. According to Bryman (2016), "Validity refers to the issue of whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept measures that concept" (p.171), while reliability is concerned mainly with whether the results of the research are replicable (Hauser et al., 2018). In order to increase the research's validity, respondents were randomly assigned by Qualtrics to one of the three different conditions. Random assignment decreases bias between groups and increases internal validity since participants have an equal chance of being assigned to an experimental or control group. This means that the researcher can eliminate bias, for instance, the presence of individual characteristics of the participants that may affect the research outcome (Neuman, 2014). However, a factor that might threaten internal validity is the maturation effect. According to Bryman (2016), participants may change and be more experienced, so they may be reluctant to the treatment and get easily bored. In order to decrease this threat, the survey was not distributed to the researcher's co-students, and the questions were short and straightforward. Furthermore, to increase external validity and produce generalizable results, this research clearly defined the research population and managed to obtain a large sample that can be considered representative of the population (Neuman, 2014).

A manipulation check was also conducted in order to check the effectiveness of the treatment. In other words, to ensure that participants comprehended and reacted to the questions based on the manipulation (Hauser et al., 2018). Moreover, the scales used for this experiment were adapted from previous research. That means they were already tested, and they all had a Cronbach's alphaabove .80, suggesting that all the scales were internally reliable (Bryman, 2016). In order to ensure reliability, the experiment design had standardized conditions (Neuman, 2014), which means that all participants received the exact same information and were treated under the exact same conditions. In addition, to ensure reliability, the methods of this research were applied consistently (Neuman, 2014). This means the research had the same scales of measurement for each variable, and participants received the same questions.

**4. Results**

This chapter includes the results obtained by the data analysis gathered via Qualtrics in SPSS. As a first step, a manipulation check was conducted through an ANOVA to ensure that the treatment was effective. As a second step, all the control variables were checked to see if there was any significant effect in the three conditions. This was examined through an ANOVA and specifically a test of between-subjects effects. As a final step, there were the analyses of the hypotheses. An analysis was conducted for every potential relationship stated in the hypotheses. The analyses conducted included a one-way ANOVA, a two-way ANOVA, bivariate regression analyses, and multiple regression analysis.

**4.1 Manipulation Check**

A manipulation check has been done to discover ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for condition on considering 34-threads as a sustainable fashion company, *F*(2, 284) = 9.96, *p* < .001, partial η² = .051. The Tukey post-hoc comparisons revealed that there was a significant difference between participants that were assigned to the non-greenwashing condition (*M =* 4.91 *SD* = 1.31) and the ones assigned in the greenwashing condition (*M =* 4.00, *SD* = 1.61) *p <*.001*.* This means that participants in the non-greenwashing condition agreed more that 34-threads is a sustainable company than participants assigned to the greenwashing condition*.* A significant difference was also found between the non-greenwashing and control groups (*M* = 4.29, *SD* = 1.42), *p <*.001. There was no significant difference between the greenwashing and the control group.

**4.2 Control Variables**

The respondents were randomly assigned in three different conditions (greenwashing, non-greenwashing & control condition) in this experiment. Testing if the randomization worked is of high importance since it is necessary to guarantee that the results are not influenced by the difference in demographics that may arise between the groups. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of the control variables in positive eWOM. If the control variables did not significantly differ within the groups, they were not considered in the following analysis. However, in case the groups differ significantly in their scores for the control variables, that means that the randomization did not work, and the control variables are important and taken into consideration in the analysis**.**

*4.2.1 age*

A correlation analysis was conducted to check if there was a significant relation between age and positive and negative eWOM. There was not a significant correlation found between age and positive and negative eWOM.

*4.2.2 Gender*

There was a significant main effect for gender [*F*(2, 280)=6.16, *p*=.02]. Based on Cohen's (1988) criterion, the effect size for the gender variable is classified as significant (.042). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the greenwashing group (*M*=3.48, *SD*=1.46) was significantly different from the non-greenwashing group (*M*=4.23, *SD*=1.19). The control group (*M*=3.81, *SD*=1.47) did not differ significantly from either of the other groups.

*4.2.3 Environmental concerns*

There was a significant main effect for environmental concerns [*F*(1, 280)=13.6, *p*=.01]. Based on Cohen's (1988) criterion, the effect size for the environmental concern variable is classified as large (.046).

*4.2.4 Facebook Frequency*

There was a significant main effect for Facebook frequency [*F*(1, 280)=13.6, *p*=.01]. Based on Cohen's (1988) criterion, the effect size for the Facebook frequency variable is classified as large (.046).

**4.3 Hypothesis Testing**

*4.3.1 The influence of greenwashing in positive eWOM.*

In the first hypothesis (H1), it was stated that participants that receive non-greenwashing information would have higher positive eWOM intentions than participants that receive greenwashing information and the control group. A one-way univariate analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relationship between the conditions (independent variable) and positive eWOM (dependent variable). There was a significant effect for conditions on positive eWOM intentions *F*(2, 280) = 7.48, *p* = .001, partial η2 = .05. The pairwise comparisons for the main effect of the three conditions using a Bonferroni adjustment indicated that the significant main effect reflects a significant difference (*p* = .001) between levels of non-greenwashing and greenwashing conditions. This means that hypothesis 1 is supported. In addition, the pattern in the data was in line with the hypothesis: the respondents in the non-greenwashing group (*M*= 4.90, *SD*= 1.31) had a higher mean score on positive eWOM intentions than the respondents in the control group (*M* = 4.2, *SD*= 1.42).  The respondents in the greenwashing group had the lowest score on positive eWOM intentions (*M*= 4.0, *SD*= 1.61).

*4.3.2 The influence of greenwashing in negative eWOM.*

In the second hypothesis (H2), it was stated that participants that receive greenwashing information would have higher negative eWOM intentions than participants that receive non-greenwashing information and the control group. A one-way univariate analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relationship between conditions (independent variable) and negative eWOM (dependent variable). There was a significant effect for conditions on negative eWOM intentions *F*(2, 284) = 6.48, *p* = .002. This means that hypothesis 2 is supported. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the control group (*M*=1.86, *SD*=.92) and the mean score for the non-greenwashing group (*M*=1.90, *SD*=1.09) were significantly different from the greenwashing group (*M*=2.40, *SD*=1.40), p = .xxx. Specifically, respondents in the greenwashing group had a higher mean score on negative eWOM intentions than the respondents in the non-greenwashing and control groups, which had the lowest mean score on negative eWOM intentions.

Figure 4.3.2.1: Significance of the relationships between the variables

Trust

H4

H3\*\* \*

H1+H2\*

eWOM intentions

Greenwashing

*Note: \* p < .001*

*4.3.3 The meditation effect of trust in the relationship between greenwashing and eWOM.*

To investigate hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4, a mediation analysis was performed. The relationship for positive eWOM was stated in hypothesis 3: the effect of greenwashing on positive eWOM is mediated by trust. The relationship for negative eWOM was stated in hypothesis 4: the effect of greenwashing on negative eWOM is mediated by trust. Since negative and positive eWOM intentions are considered separate and not reverse variables, it is important to find out more about both types of eWOM intentions. Therefore, the model was tested twice through a mediation analysis, using regression analysis. For the following analysis, two dummy variables were created for the manipulation. The first dummy variable (DumGreenwash) separates the greenwashing condition (1) from the non-greenwashing and control condition (0). The second dummy variable (DumPos) separates the non-greenwashing condition (1) from the negative eWOM intentions (0). Dummy variables were created to be able to include the categorical variables in the regression analysis. For trust, the mentioned above-computed variable was used to test the relationships.

Figure 4.3.3.1 Relationships that are tested for the complete model.

Trust

Mediator

a

b

c

eWOM intentions

Dependent variable

Greenwashing

Independent variable

*4.3.4 Positive eWOM (H1).*

-The relationship between greenwashing and positive eWOM (c).

To test the relationship between greenwashing and positive eWOM, a regression analysis was conducted. The independent variables were the dummy variables. The dependent variable is the intention to participate in positive eWOM, which is a continuous variable. The results showed no significant relationship between the greenwashing dummy and positive eWOM, β = -0.11, *p* = .097. However, a significant effect of the non-greenwashing dummy on positive eWOM was found (report test stats: Beta and p-value)

- The relationship between greenwashing and trust (a).

The regression analysis of the non-greenwashing dummy, a categorical independent variable, and trust, a continuous dependent variable, showed a significant relationship. According to the results greenwashing explain 6% of variance in trust, *Fchange*(2, 284) = 9.05, *p* = .001. The greenwashing condition showed to differ significantly compared to the control and non-greenwashing condition. Respondents from greenwashing condition score less on trust (β = -0.11, p < 009, than the respondents in the control and non-greenwashing condition (β= 0.17, *p* < 0.01). Conditions showed a positive correlation (R=0.24) with trust and explained 6% of the variance. The regression model of greenwashing and trust is statistically significant with a *p*-value < 0.001.

- The influence of both trust and greenwashing on positive eWOM intentions (b+c).

To test the relationship between trust and positive eWOM intentions, and bivariate regression analysis was conducted. Trust was an independent variable used as predictors, and positive eWOM was the dependent variable. Trust and positive eWOM are both continuous variables. There was a significant relationship between trust and positive eWOM. Trust and greenwashing conditions explain together 24% of variance in positive eWOM, *Fchange*(3, 283) = 29.43, *p* < .001. This is a significant relationship. Trust has a positive significant influence on positive eWOM (β = .48, *p* < .001). For every step increase in trust, the respondents scored 0.60 higher on intentions to participate in positive eWOM. Furthermore, in the non-greenwashing condition and the control group respondents (β= 0.07, *p*= .26). are more likely to participate in positive eWOM than respondents in the greenwashing condition (β= -0.06 *p*= .32). Greenwashing had a negative relationship with positive eWOM intentions. For the model of positive eWOM, a significant relationship has been found between positive eWOM and non-greenwashing and control conditions.

In contrast, a non-significant relationship was found between positive eWOM and the greenwashing condition. There was also a significant relationship between trust and positive eWOM. To conclude, whether a mediation effect exists, the effect of greenwashing on positive eWOM has to be compared before and after the dependent variable trust is included in the regression. The coefficients of the regression when greenwashing is the only independent variable are β= -0.34 for DumGreenWash condition and β=0.422 for DumPos. When Trust is added as an additional independent variable the coefficients are reduced to β= -0.18 and β= 0.20, respectively. Hence, trust is a partial mediator between greenwashing and positive eWOM with a coefficient of R=0.57, *p* < 0.001.

Figure 4.3.6.2 Significant and non-significant relationships in the model of positive eWOM

Trust

Mediator

b\*

a\*

Positive**-**eWOM intentions

Dependent variable

c\*

Non-Greenwashing

Independent variable

*Note: \* p < .001*

*4.3.5 Negative eWOM (H2).*

*-* The relationship between greenwashing and negative eWOM (c).

To test the relationship between greenwashing and negative eWOM, a bivariate regression analysis was conducted. The independent variable is greenwashing, which is a categorical variable. The dependent variable is the intention to participate in negative eWOM, which is a continuous variable. There is a significant relationship between greenwashing and negative eWOM, in which greenwashing explains 0.54 % of the variance in negative eWOM, *Fchange*(2, 284) = 6.48, *p* < .001. No significant relationship has been found between the non-greenwashing and control conditions with the negative eWOM intentions (β= .028, *p*=.678).

- The relationship between greenwashing and trust (a).

The analysis of the relationship between greenwashing, a categorical independent variable, and trust, a continuous dependent variable, the same analysis conducted for positive eWOM can also be used here. The results showed a significant relationship between greenwashing and trust. According to the results greenwashing explain 6% of variance in trust, *Fchange*(2, 284) = 9.05, *p* < .001. The greenwashing condition showed to differ significantly compared to the control and non-greenwashing condition. Respondents from greenwashing condition score less on trust (β= -0.11, *p* < 009, than the respondents in the control and non-greenwashing condition (β= 0.17, *p* < 0.01). Conditions showed a positive correlation (R=0.24) with trust and explained 6% of the variance. The regression model of greenwashing and trust is statistically significant with a *p* < 0.001.

- The influence of both greenwashing and trust on negative eWOM (b+c).

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to see whether there is a significant relationship between greenwashing conditions and negative eWOM, and trust and

negative eWOM. Greenwashing and trust are both independent variables used as predictors and negative eWOM as a dependent variable. Greenwashing is categorical, whereas trust and negative eWOM are continuous variables. There is a significant relationship between greenwashing conditions and trust with negative eWOM. Greenwashing and trust explain together 16 % of variance in negative eWOM, *Fchange*(3, 283) = 17.84, *p* < .001. The results show that for every step increase in trust, the respondent's intentions to participate in negative eWOM decreased by 0.44. This means that trust has a significant negative relation with negative eWOM intentions. Furthermore, in the greenwashing condition, respondents were significantly more likely to participate in negative eWOM (β=.18, *p* < 0.01) than respondents in the non-greenwashing and control condition (*β*= .086, *p*= .18). The relationship between greenwashing and negative eWOM remained significant before and after, including trust (a) and (c). However, the non-greenwashing condition has a smaller magnitude when trust is involved.

Figure 4.3.6.3 Significant and non-significant relationships in the model of positive eWOM

Trust

Mediator

b\*

a

c\*

Negative**-**eWOM intentions

Dependent variable

Greenwashing

Independent variable

*Note: \* p < .001*

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**Appendix**

## Appendix A

Table 1: Age of respondents (N = 287)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Minimum | |  | Maximum | |  |
| 18 |  |  | | 69 |  |
| Mean: 27.22, SD: 7.07, Total: 287 |  |  | |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Table 2: Demographics of respondents | | |
| Characteristics | Frequency | n = 287  % |
| *Gender* |  |  |
| Male | 83 | 28.9 |
| Female | 202 | 70.4 |
| Prefer not to say | 2 | .7 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| *Income level* |  |  |
| €0 - €24.999 | 197 | 68.6 |
| €25.999 - €49.999 | 37 | 12.9 |
| €50.000 - €74.999 | 6 | 2.1 |
| €75.000 - €99.999 | 4 | 1.4 |
| I don’t know | 15 | 5.2 |
| Prefer not to say | 28 | 9.8 |

## Appendix B

Table 5: Items that are combined in the variables and the sources they are retrieved from.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Variable/construct | Question | Source |
| Environmental concerns | I prefer to buy products from sustainable companies. | Toti, & Moulins, (2016). |
|  | I prefer buying products with an eco-label. |  |
|  | I prefer to buy in shops that highlight ecological or organic products. |  |
|  | I prefer to do my shopping in stores that promote fair trade. |  |
|  | I restrict my consumption (food, energy, clothing, etc.) to what I really need. |  |
|  |  |  |
| Manipulation check | 34-Threads is a sustainable company. | No source. |
| Morality | Sincerity of the fashion company. | Leach et al. (2007). |
|  | Honesty of the fashion company. |  |
|  | Trustworthiness of the fashion company. |  |
| Competence | Competence of the fashion company. | Leach et al. (2007). |
|  | Intelligence of the fashion company. |  |
|  | Skillfulness of the fashion company. |  |
| Positive eWOM | I would give a positive reaction under the post. | Eisingerich, et al. (2015). |
|  | I would say positive things about the company on Facebook. |  |
|  | I would start to follow the Facebook page of the company. |  |
|  | I would "like" this post on Facebook. |  |
|  | I would share this post with friends.  I would recommend the clothes of this company to friends. |  |
|  |  |  |
| Negative eWOM | I would be willing to say negative things about the company on Facebook. | Eisingerich et al. (2015). |
|  | I would share the post with friends to express negative feelings. |  |
|  | I would give a negative reaction under the post. |  |
|  | I would say negative things about the fashion products they deliver to their customers. |  |
| Demographics | Gender | No source |
|  | Age  Income |  |
|  |  |  |
| Population check | Age  Facebook account | No Source |
|  |  |  |

## Appendix C

Christina MA thesis

**Introduction**  
  
Dear participant,   
  
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. This research is carried out by a Media & Business master student at Erasmus University Rotterdam. The questions are about your opinions on the fashion industries' sustainable practices and social media activities. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, which means that you can stop the questionnaire at any time by closing your browser.   
  
  
Your answers to the questions will be processed anonymously, and the results of this survey will only be used for the aforementioned research. Please read the questions carefully and click on the answer that best reflects your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 6 minutes of your time. For the questions or comments, please email to: 576640cg@student.eur.nl.

**Environmental Concerns**  
  
Please answer the following questions about your environmental concerns. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Somewhat disagree (3) | Neither agree nor disagree (4) | Somewhat agree (5) | Agree (6) | Strongly agree (7) |
| I prefer to buy products from sustainable companies. (1) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I prefer buying products with an eco-label. (2) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I prefer to buy in shops that highlight ecological or organic products. (3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I prefer to do my shopping in stores that promote fair trade. (4) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I restrict my consumption (food, energy, clothing, etc.) to what I really need. (5) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Control Condition**

Please carefully look at the Facebook post from the fashion company '34 Threads' on the next page.

Εικόνα που περιέχει κείμενο

Περιγραφή που δημιουργήθηκε αυτόματα

**Greenwashing Condition**

**Please read the text below carefully.**

In 2020, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) conducted a study about fashion brands that truly are sustainable. The agency has investigated thousands of misleading green labeling cases and works hard to ferret out and shut down offenders. It is no secret that consumers want environmentally friendly products and that companies are trying to meet that need. Many consumers buy products with "green" or "eco-friendly" labels that indicate the materials' source. Sometimes these labels can prove to be quite misleading. For instance, H&M launched a more sustainable "Conscious Collection" and used green labels. The collection used more sustainable materials but blended them with other fabrics to keep the prices low. Fabric blends cannot be recycled, a fact which contradicts the brands' whole recycling campaign.     
 On the next page, you will see a Facebook message from a fashion company named '34 Threads'. The FTC study proved that this company scores **low**on sustainability. The company does not use certified green claims and does not have clear green commitments. The green labels they use verify that the collection meets the lowest environmental quality and performance standards under the international guidelines for environmental labeling programs, ISO 14020 and 14024.

Please carefully look at the Facebook post from the fashion company '34 Threads' on the next page.

Εικόνα που περιέχει κείμενο

Περιγραφή που δημιουργήθηκε αυτόματα

**Non-Greenwashing Condition**

**Please read the text below carefully.**

In 2020, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) conducted a study about fashion brands that truly are sustainable. The agency has investigated thousands of misleading green labeling cases and works hard to ferret out and shut down offenders. It is no secret that consumers want environmentally friendly products and that companies are trying to meet that need. Many consumers buy products with "green" or "eco-friendly" labels that indicate the materials' source. Sometimes these labels can prove to be quite misleading. For instance, H&M launched a more sustainable "Conscious Collection" and used green labels. The collection used more sustainable materials but blended them with other fabrics to keep the prices low. Fabric blends cannot be recycled, a fact which contradicts the brands' whole recycling campaign.     
 On the next page, you will see a Facebook message from a fashion company named '34 Threads'. The FTC study proved that this company scores **high**on sustainability. The company uses certified green claims and has clear green commitments. The green labels they use verify that the collection meets the highest environmental quality and performance standards under the international guidelines for environmental labeling programs, ISO 14020 and 14024.

Please carefully look at the Facebook post from the fashion company '34 Threads' on the next page.

Εικόνα που περιέχει κείμενο

Περιγραφή που δημιουργήθηκε αυτόματα

**Manipulation Check**

Thank you for reading this Facebook post. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?  
  
  
34 Threads is a sustainable fashion company.

* Strongly disagree (1)
* Disagree (2)
* Some
* what disagree (3)
* Neither agree nor disagree (4)
* Somewhat agree (5)
* Agree (6)
* Strongly agree (7)

**Trust**

**Morality**

Your assessment of the organization's morality. How do you estimate the following characteristics of the fashion company?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very low (1) | Low (2) | Slightly low (3) | Neither low nor high (4) | Slightly high (5) | High (6) | Very high (7) |
| Honesty (1) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sincerity (2) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Trustworthiness (3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Competence**

Your assessment of the organization's competence. How do you estimate the following characteristics of the fashion company?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very low (1) | Low (2) | Slightly low (3) | Neither low nor high (4) | Slightly high (5) | High (6) | Very high (7) |
| Competence (1) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Intelligence (2) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Skillfulness (3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**eWOM**

**Positive eWOM**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the Facebook post you saw before.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Somewhat disagree (3) | Neither agree nor disagree (4) | Somewhat agree (5) | Agree (6) | Strongly agree (7) |
| I would 'like' this post on Facebook. (1) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would give a positive reaction under the post. (2) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would share this post with friends. (3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would say positive things about the company on Facebook. (4) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would recommend the clothes of this company to friends. (5) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would start to follow the Facebook page of the company. (6) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Negative eWOM**

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning the Facebook post you saw before.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Somewhat disagree (3) | Neither agree nor disagree (4) | Somewhat agree (5) | Agree (6) | Strongly agree (7) |
| I would give a negative reaction under the post. (1) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would share the post with friends to express negative feelings about it. (2) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would be willing to say negative things about the company on Facebook. (3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would say negative things about the fashion products they deliver to their customers. (4) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Page Break |  |

**Age**

What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Facebook account**

Do you currently have a Facebook account?

* Yes (1)
* No (2)

**Facebook Usage**

If yes, how often do you use it?

* Very infrequently (1)
* Somewhat infrequently (2)
* Occasionally (3)
* Somewhat frequently (4)
* Very frequently (5)

**Gender**

Please indicate your gender.

* Male (1)
* Female (2)
* Other (3)
* Prefer not to say (4)

**Income**

Which of the options below best describes your personal income over the past year?

* €0 to €24.999 (1)
* €25.000 to €49.999 (2)
* €50.000 to €74.999 (3)
* €75.000 to €99.999 (4)
* €100.000 to €124.999 (5)
* €125.000 to €149.999 (6)
* I don’t know (7)
* Prefer not to say (8)

**Thank you message.**

You have come to the end of the questionnaire. In this survey, we were interested in your opinion on the fashion industries' sustainable practices. A fictitious fashion company has been used to avoid that a company's reputation might influence your opinion. We have also referred to an investigation by the FTC. The complete investigation report of the FTC can be found here:  
https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/media-resources/truth-advertising/green-guides  
Thank you for your participation! If you have any questions about the study, please contact us by email to576640cg@student.eur.nl. You can send your answers by clicking on the arrow button. 

End of Block: Trust